

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the theme of female protagonists' dreams of social advancement in two novels, *Gilgi, One of Us* by Irmgard Keun and *Women as Lovers* by Elfriede Jelinek. It is divided into three main parts, with the introductory part focusing on the novel *Gilgi, One of Us*, the second part on *Women as Lovers*, and the final part on a comparative analysis of the protagonists' dreams of social ascent. Before the analysis itself, the first two chapters initially offer a theoretical background to the books in the form of a cultural and literary context and an introduction to the author's life. Thus, in the case of *Gilgi, One of Us*, the focus lies primarily on society during the Weimar Republic, the concept of the new woman is introduced, and as far as the literary context is concerned, the literature of the new objectivity is discussed. The analysis shows that the protagonist Gilgi corresponds to the concept of the new woman. Her inner attitude, built on diligence and discipline, is the basis for her ambitious dreams of getting as far as possible through her own efforts. In the case of *The Women as Lovers* the status of women in the second half of the 20th century is underlined, the feminist-oriented literature of the 1970s is introduced, and the protagonists Brigitte and Paula are portrayed as women who are unable to move up in society on their own and depend on their men for their dreams of advancement. From the final comparison of the dreams of the protagonists, it is evident that Paula and Brigitte distinctly differ from Gilgi in the style in which they want to progress higher in society. While Gilgi wants to be fully independent, Paula and Brigitte put their fate in the hands of their male counterparts. Brigitte is successful, but Paula is not. Whether Gilgi moves up in society is not revealed by the open ending of the book.